



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Office of the
Commissioner

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Public Hearing – February 4, 2013
Transportation Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Jim Redeker
Department of Transportation

Proposed S.B. 470 – An Act Requiring Height Barriers at all Entrances to the Merritt Parkway.

The Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) is opposed to S.B. 470 and respectfully offers the following comments.

Currently, the following are prohibited from entry upon and use of the Merritt Parkway:

- Commercial motor vehicles;
- Trailers;
- All towed vehicles except as provided in section 14-298-240;
- Buses;
- Vehicles bearing other than passenger, camper, taxicab, vanpool or hearse registrations and those vehicles bearing combination registrations which have a gross weight in excess of seventy five hundred pounds; and
- Any vehicle, including its load, that is more than 24 feet long, 7.5 feet wide, or 8 feet high.

The typical clearance on the bridges over the Merritt Parkway is between 12 ½ and 14 ½ feet. The occurrence of vehicles entering the parkway and causing damage to the structures or significant traffic delays is very infrequent. Even in those instances where oversize vehicles have struck an overpass, the damage was minimal and didn't require a closure for a significant period of time.

The Office of the State Traffic Administration (OSTA) has the authority to issue permits for entry upon and use of parkways by vehicles normally excluded when the interests of public necessity are served thereby. The permitted vehicles may be over 8 feet. Parkway permits are typically issued for 1) vehicles that provide goods and services to the service areas located on the parkways; and 2) vehicles associated with construction work being performed by private contractors at the parkway service areas

Certain vehicles are also exempt from the OSTA regulations governing the use of the parkway. These exempt vehicles may be over 8 feet in height. Exempt vehicles typically include:

- Emergency vehicles that need to respond to a crash or other emergency situation on the parkways;
- Department maintenance vehicles that need to plow, mow, and maintain the parkways; and
- Vehicles associated with construction work being performed by Department of Transportation contractors.

The Merritt Parkway has more than forty (40) entrance ramps along its length. Overhead detection systems would require traffic poles with mounted detectors, a traffic cabinet, utility connections and conduits to/from the cabinet and other equipment along with the appropriate warning devices to an oversize vehicle (flashing lights or an audible alarm).

The costs associated with such installations are estimated at \$25,000 per location, requiring regular maintenance.

For further information or questions, please contact Pam Sucato, Legislative Program Manager for the Department of Transportation, at (860) 594-3013.